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- October, 2000.

Dear Naomi, Jonathan, Dina, David and Victor - As you know, after Omama died, we started to go through a box of hundreds of letters from the family in Europe, which were in Omama's house. They were written from 1940 on. As you expressed an interest, I am now working translating the German letters, and hope to find translators for the Slovak and Hungarian ones. It is a hard, emotional work and I hope it will bring your family back to life for you, with their plans, hopes and tragedies. Your Omama and Opapa are referred to as "Erzsi" and "Jeno"in the letters.. Love - Ida

Try and imagine how Erzsi and Jeno felt when they said goodbye to their families in Czechoslovakia at the end of March 1940, at ages 33 and 35, and left for Palestine with their 7 and 4-year old Ida and Judit. From their family's early letters from Czechoslovakia, written in reaction to Jeno and Erzsi's first reports about their new life, we hear how frightened and bewildered the young couple was in their new foreign surroundings.... (* A side issue: Before leaving, Jeno and Erzsi had packed many household belongings and clothes, china etc. in several crates for transportation to Palestine. These crates got stuck en-route somewhere and didn't arrive in Palestine till a year after the arrival of the family . The many inquiries in these letters are about these missing crates) And now a brief "Who is Who":

The family in Slovakia consisted of:

Jeno's family: Leopolod and Bertha Lichtenstein (referred to as "Apa", or "Mama" - these are Ida's and Judit's grandparents), their son Moritz (and wife Marianne, daughters Zuzi and Lisi), their son Bela (wife Alice, daughter Anicka), their daughter Ancsi (that is – Ida and Judit's aunt...) and her daughter Elfi (now living in Paris) who was about 4 years old in 1940... Ernst was Ancsi's husband (they later divorced) .Ernst had left in 1938 or 1939 for Argentina, with the plan that his wife and daughter would follow him later. As you will see below, Ancsi and Elfi tried to join him in 1940 but got caught by the war and were stuck in London. . Elfi, with many other children, was evacuated to the countryside in England. Some time in that period Ancsi, unfortunately, had a mental breakdown and had to be put in a Sanatorium. Eugene Wise, Stephen and Clare Wise's father, did a lot to take care of her and to inform the family of her condition.

Erzsi's family: Hugo Kohn, her father (77 years old in 1940) , and Imre and Anina - Erzsi's brother and sister. Imre lived in Czechoslovakia with his father Hugo, and Anina and her family lived in Hungary.

Anina was married to Hugo Lang, and they had two children: Mitzi and Hansi, who were 2-3 years younger than Ida and Judit. They were always very delicate, and feeding them was a family preoccupation...

- * note: You must imagine the conditions in Europe & the world at the time: Hitler had taken over Czechoslovakia. He "detached" Slovakia and made it into a Slovak puppet state by 1938. War was declared when he invaded Poland. He proceeded to take over France, Holland, Danemark, Belgium, Norway and invaded Russia . In 1940/41 he was "Blitzing" London .

*note: from the end of 1940 it seems that mailing letters ~~were~~ was not always possible. But the family evidently established channels of communications through a

Mrs. Hedwig Karlman in Istambul, and a Dr. Silberstein in Geneva. Turkey at the time was neutral and could receive mail from both sides of the conflict.
* note: in the text, an asterix and *Italics*, denote my comment, not the writer's, and are intended to provide background. When I leave out some text I use "....."
* note: Certain points and subjects were repeated over and over again in the letters. In most cases I didn't eliminate repetitions, as I believe they convey an idea of what was important to the writers. I chose letters and telegrams (repetitions and all) whose cumulative effect will – I hope - convey the constantly tightening of the noose around the family and the Jews at that time...
- ---------- This is the end of the "Notes" section. Now to the

Letters & other communications from Slovakia & Hungary: (some in summary)
Note: *Erzsi and Jeno had to leave in such a hurry upon confirmation of their visa to Palestine, that they had only a few days to pack. They left their large apartment as is It was on the second floor of a house adjacent to the elder Lichtenstein house, and Bela and Alice lived on the first floor in a smaller apartment. Alice couldn't wait to move upstairs into the larger one vacated by Erzsi and Jenoe..*
A day or two after Erzsi and Jeno's departure at the end of March 1940, Marianne, her sister-in law, writes a few lines : March 29, 1940:....I know you will be interested, dear Erzsi, to learn what I did with your things.... I scattered the furniture we discussed... among family and friends....and put the rest in the spare room as Alice is already anxious to move into the other rooms.... Love - Marianne

April 3, 1940: Dear children - This is addressed to Laci: I am somewhat surprised to learn that you broke up with Lilly so soon - you sometimes act too hastily.... One shouldn't rush into things, especially where marriage is concerned... Are you sure you are not the one who precipitated this?... You talk about asking for reimbursement of expenses (**Laci paid for Lilly's travel expenses from Czechoslovakia where he had met her a short while before this, and the marriage was arranged mainly to enable her to escape Europe. Laci agreed, and had told his family at that time something to the effect: "Well, I like her anyway, so maybe we will stay married rather than do this just as a temporary marriage of convenience...)* . Such demand should depend on her and her family's behavior: if they don't demand a divorce settlement, you should not demand reimbursement either. In any event, you have Erzsi and Jeno there now and can consult with them. After this is over, I feel you should marry as soon as possible, but you have to be more responsible in your decisions. In the case of Lilly, you told us here that you like her, and now you tell us that over there you don't... I cannot understand why you think the divorce will take two years..... We have spoken to the bank about the transfer of money to you and to Jenoe and it should reach you in a few days... It is much quieter now without all of you... but we must content ourselves with news which I expect you will send us regularly .. We are anxiously awaiting news of Erzsi and Jeno's arrival, and especially about how Idus and Judit are - Love - Apa

April 15, 1940: My dears, It is really peculiar that we haven't heard from you yet – after all you had arrived there on the 3rd – i.e. 12 days ago.. Yesterday your Dad, Erzi, was here with Imre, and they too were looking for mail. You should designate a certain day

of each week for writing to us. After we were married, Marianne's father wrote regularly, every Friday…. The transport of Miklos Schaechter's group has been held up in Bratislava - they are awaiting permission to go through Yugoslavia… Love – Moritz

Undated letter from April 1940, from Imre, Erzsi's brother (*_written in response to the first letter Erzsi wrote after the family's arrival in Palestine on April 4, 1940. He is urging her to "visit Hansi" which means "go to Canada, where_ Dr. Hans Selye _lives". He was a first cousin of Erzsi and Imre. He became a world-renown scientist working on the effects of stress on the body. You may have heard his name in the scientific world... He had married a gentile woman and – it turned out – wanted to have nothing to do with the family once he left Europe_)

Dear Erzsi – We were happy to receive your first letter….we hope you are getting used to the food…I am sure there are restaurants where you can find food cooked in mid-European style……I am writing this on thin paper so you may get it faster than my first letter which I wrote on regular-weight paper and which was probably sent by surface mail so you will get it later.

You say you don't know what to do about deciding to visit Hansi …– I cannot advise you as it is difficult to judge from here. You know very well that I was always strongly in favor of your going there. (**I think Erzsi and Jeno had applied for two visas at the end of 1939 or 1940 – one to Palestine and one to Canada. The one to Palestine came through first and they decided, with the Lichtenstein family urging the same thing, not to take a chance and wait any longer but to go to Palestine... As it turned out, it was the right decision, because had they waited another few weeks Italy would have entered the war and Erzsi, Jeno and we – Ida and Judit - would not have been able to travel by train – as we did – to Trieste, and to take the passenger boat "Marco Polo" to Palestine, arriving there April 1940....).* But since you did not go there directly from here, I think you should now rest for a few weeks and then continue your journey to him. What I do not understand at all is how you can ..suddenly now..consider going to visit Franci *(*a distant relative living in Forest Hills, NY)* Is this possible at all under the circumstances? This is news to me, as you never discussed this possibility with me before… I have always known what you are telling me about how difficult it is to make a living in Palestine. That is why I always wanted you to go to Hansi at any price…. Father is well and we will try to get him a visa for Hungary to visit Anina… On the land we are planting potatoes now… Erzsi, I think I understood some of your coded words, but when you write about "flower" you must be clearer in what you mean… Will Laci's divorce from Lilly go smoothly? -- Love -- Imre.

April 21, 1940: ….. we got your letter of the 9th and would ask you to always type, because your handwriting, dear Erzsi, is nearly illegible…. I don't understand what you write:.." we're not interested in what Bela has to say… nor in the fact that others..have gotten used to living in a new place…". (**Note that this is the first time we read a quote from a letter Erzsi evidently wrote. We finally hear her own individual voice here and she is protesting against the preachings of the family that Erzsi and Jenoe " should adapt, not worry, take a maid or do this, that and the other... ")*

As to you furniture, we too – like you - feel you did the right thing in leaving it here….I can imagine that the children are a lot of work and you could perhaps put them in a "Kinderheim" during the day, or else simply engage a maid….This must make you quite

nervous, dear Erzsi… the main thing is that they should not get sick… we hope they will get used to the climate and the new food…. You don't write whether the children mention us…
For the time being you have all the resources you need…As you say, it is difficult to start any business there…. With regard to Laci's divorce from Lily, this should be done as soon as possible….what do you mean by "it won't go so smoothly?" Do you think she will demand a settlement?… Diplomacy is necessary here…in any event, Laci shouldn't for the moment try and force the issue – let the Hellmans (*Lilly's family)* force it first!

Now to the most important question: Why are you asking whether to go to Hansi (**Canada)* of Franci (**U.S.*)?. After all, we clearly discussed that at the first opportunity you would go to Canada. Of course the U.S. would be best, because then you wouldn't have to go to Argentina… However, we don't understand how you think it would be possible for you to go to the U.S.? You don't write clearly – please don't spare paper or writing time, and write more clearly…..Business is very slow….The State has decreed business salary raises of 20%, and has raised the price of lumber from state forests… the work in the fields is going well and the livestock is doing well too…. Love – Apa

May 5, 1940: Dear children…. We are following up on the crates and hope to arrange for their arrival soon…. We are worried to hear that Ancsi is still weak…. The lawyer here is following up on Laci's divorce and will let us know… Bela feels you should get in touch with Marianne's brother Hans in Australia in case your going to Canada is not possible… We have had no further news from you….Each of you could write us alternately, once a week You could all follow Dezso's example (*He was another Lichtenstein cousin who had arrived in Palestine earlier)* . He has been there for two years now and has been writing twice a week… - Love – Apa

Following is a rare letter from Alice, Bela's wife. She was 12 years younger than Bela, a beautiful and light-hearted young woman, whom Bela spoiled utterly. She was used to being taken care of and her letter (unlike the letters of all others in the family) shows her still spirited and relatively carefree, despite the conditions at the time..
Oct. 8, 1940: Dear Erzsi, …I apologize…., but I suffer from a terrible disease called "writing laziness"…Also ,I have only Edit to help me now, so I have less time….I had a good maid but she had to leave..I guess you understand why…. In answer to your question – it is working out more or less with Edit, that's all I can say ..she is not a bad girl, but she is forgetful and has two left hands…From the 15th on I have engaged your favorite – Miss Etelka – she will cook lunch and leave thereafter…Bela isn't enchanted with the idea that your pearl is coming to cook for us because he thinks my cooking is fine. The poor guy wouldn't complain even if the food were burnt – so what I mean to say is that he has no understanding for such things…I am enjoying the apartment…it is beautiful… some of your furniture fits into it perfectly….I had new pink curtains made to match the pink in the upholstery…I would hate to leave this apartment as we have few pleasures left now…we rarely go out and I even go less frequently to visit Mama…In the summer we made an enormous amount of fruit and vegetable preserves…My dear husband let me go on vacation to the spa for 8 days, with my mother and sister…. I took Annie to the park every day… I left the sweetest to the end: though she's fine, I feel Annie weighs

very little for her age.... She sometimes doesn't eat a thing for 2-3 days...I took her to the doctor and he told me not to worry because his own daughter doesn't eat either...but this is no consolation for me...the only food she really eats sometimes is fruit... Otherwise she is very sweet.... Love - Alice

- around Nov. 1940 (undated)– (*long letter from Marianne about Zuzi contracting polio).* My dears, I finally have a little time to write...On June 6 we brought Zuzi to spend some time in the mountains, in a "Kinderheim". ..they called two weeks later to say she had the flu... four days later her right foot was paralyzed and we immediately travelled there...we brought her to the hospital & stayed with her for
- 2 ½ weeks....it was terrible... Zuzi was in terrible pain which we were unable to relieve..she could not bear to be touched..was completely stiff from her head to her feet (with exception of arms and hands)...changing her position, washing her etc. was torture for her...by now she regained movement in most of her body, except her leg..she's home now and goes bravely for treatments...cannot play with children and spends a lot of time with adults, which has made her older than her years...Annie is too young for her to play with...she misses Idus and Judit... - Love – Marianne

Nov. 30, 1940 – letter from Gerti, Imre's wife (Erzsi's sister-in-law in Diviaky):
Dearest Erzsi, We had great pleasure with your wonderful letters – we got a few at once...I am glad that you are feeling so well. How happy we would be if we could be with you and take all our dear ones with us...My parents moved here...my father will need a serious kidney operation... As to ourselves – Mrs. Ertl comes from 6 a.m. to noon and now that she knows I am entirely dependent on her she takes things very easy... She then comes in the afternoon to wash the dishes and clean up the kitchen....I am helping her with putting the house in order and washing the morning dishes... After dinner Maria comes to wash the dishes – at first I did it myself but Imre was against it..We live very quietly now – haven't been to a movie since last winter. After the chores are done we sit in the small room and play scrabble..As to visiting, I sometimes go to the Lichtensteins and to Edith Braun...The back room is beautiful now, with your furniture and I take good care of it so I can give it back to you without a blemish. May God grant that it will not be too long till then... You write such interesting and detailed letters – I'm looking forward to your next one - Love – Gerti

Nov. 30, 1940 – letter from Anina, Erzsi's sister in Hungary: (**This letter identifies "Auntie" mentioned in some letters – she seems to belong to Hugo Lang's side of the family. Hugo, as I noted at the start, was Anina's husband)*
Dear Erzsi,.... You reprimand me about not numbering my letters carefully – I am sorry....I will try to be more accurate... Aunty writes, asking if you got her letter...Even if you don't need her, please write to her to thank her for her offer of help. Her address is: Mrs. Margaret Colley, 105 No. Oakland Ave., Pasadena, Calif. Please explain to her that you are doing it so late because you just learned from me that she had written, but that you didn't get the letter.... I am glad to hear that you did not go to live in Jerusalem. For you, living in a small town is much better than in a big city . You write you are afraid we will be transferred to Edit's country (**does she mean Germany? Poland?*). Though we heard rumors about this, we don't believe so because our chief (*she means the head of State – Horty – who at that time still protected "his" Jews...)* is against it.. But because such danger does exist nevertheless, I have repeatedly written to you about getting us permits (**visas*) – but, alas, what can we do if these are unobtainable...I have

a lot of work now that Dora has left..the children are very good. Being with them constantly has its positive side, except for mealtimes, which are pure torture..Being with them is good also because it leavesme little time to think…I have bought a pig..I could use your expertise with what to do with all the parts…. I will accept delivery on the 9th but can have it slaughtered only on the 11th… I hope it will feel good in the horse-stall for two days… - Kisses - Anina

Dec. 1940 – Omama writes how worried she is about Ancsi and Elfi . She says that Ernst wrote that he hopes to bring Elfi to Argentina, to join him.

March, 1941 – telegram from Apa, visiting Budapest, informing Jeno and Erzsi that two money transfers were made via a certain Baratz and " no news about the crates."

-- Apr. 5, '41 - a Hungarian letter from Apa, evidently reacting to Erzsi's suggestion that Ancsi, who had already fallen ill, be brought to Palestine. Apa asks " I like the idea that you should bring Ancsi to you in Palestine, but it's not clear to me what's to happen with Elfi?"…

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(* At the bottom of the following letter, there is the following note from Zurich:

" Dear Mr. Lichtenstein - If I can be helpful to you from here in Zurich, please let me know. Signed: Ervin Zalan, Zurich 7, Plattenstr. 22):

(* *He refers to Ancsi's breakdown) :*

Apr. 18 '41: Haven't heard from you – it is not possible that we remain without news – try to write through any possible channel….In Budapest we consulted with different doctors about Mama but they could not agree so we did nothing. She is keeping a stricter diet now and feels a little better. Marianne gave birth early to a little daughter, at home (there was no time to go to the hospital), her name is Lisl.. She is fine. We are worried that you are not getting all our letters… Our biggest worry now is about Ancsi and Elfi, how Ancsi will recover and what's to happen with her and Elfi. We are awaiting news about this from Ernst. … I expect you to find channels to let us have your news…. . Dear Mama, especially, is very worried about you. - Love - Apa and Moritz

March 24, 1941: (*A rare letter from Anina's young children – Mitzi and Hansi, to their cousins, Ida and Judit*)

Dear Iduska and Juditka, We were very happy with your letter to us and to Katoka. Iduska – we , too, have a big store (*this was a miniature, like a doll-house),* with a show-window and drawers for all the things. Where do you like it better – in Palestine, or here? Do you have girl-friends? We have one. I already have a porcelain doll and watercolors, which mama and Papa gave us. The doll has hair. I also got a doll bed. How are you? In the fall I will go to school. Do you have a nice apartment? What can you cook already, Iduska? I can make an omelette, and tea. We have a radio. Do you have one? When you came there, what kind of food did they give you which you didn't like? Kisses – Mitzi and Hansi . P.S. *from their mother Anina*: : They are amending the laws for the third time (*the anti-Jewish laws…)* and we are afraid of the consequences for us….the children have decidedly better color and I assume it is the result of the liver-extract injections, as I had expected. – Anina

May 21, 1941. Dear Erzsi and Jeno – We're visiting at home now (*i.e. they got permission to travel from Hungary to Diviaky in Slovakia)* but just for a short while. ….they told us here that you feel well there now… Nevertheless our most urgent concern here is that you get to the U.S. as soon as possible…I wrote Mrs. Colley about it as she could be helpful to you, if it isn't too late now… We heard from Bela that Nemzeti Bank recently authorized the transfer of $20,000 to New York and I hope this should be sufficient (*for getting an affidavit of financial support?) ….I asked Mrs. Colley to write to you if more money is needed… So stop this indecision and go there as soon as possible… As Bela rightly says – on one hand you are asking us for advice here, but on the other you listen to advice over there…We have a lot of trouble and worries here… but you are our biggest worry because of your ill-considered and immature behavior …. I cabled you recently and I am curious if you received the message… Kisses - Anina (*Imre, her brother, adds a note:*) I would be happy if you would go to Franci (* *U.S).* though I don't think anything can be done now, which causes me great worry….I sent you a letter through Dr. Silberstein – Love - Imre

June 16, 1941: (from Imre, Erzsi's brother in Czechoslovakia:)… We received a telegram from Ernst saying that Ancsi visited Elfi in the children's home (outside of London)…Ancsi is having a hard time…it is a shame, because if she had had a different approach to life she would have done better….I haven't seen Mano (*Katoka's father*) for a long time..they will be visiting here soon..I would like Katoka to spend the summer with us…Mano is having financial difficulties as so many families depend on him…I can't complain about our situation here as long as I can make enough for us to live on. Of course I don't know how long I can continue working – I don't think it will be too long….but I'm not going to worry about it in advance…the peasants still behave correctly towards us… Gerti (*his wife*) is running the household… Anna comes every afternoon for an hour to take care of the cows…You might be surprised if I tell you that I repaired the tennis court and we will play in three days..we don't have any company and entertainment, and the exercise will do us good. This is the only thing we can do for diversion as we cannot go to the park to swim and are not allowed to go fishing either. I want to ask many questions about the children etc. but won't do so because I know you won't answer anyway. I am expecting my landlord in ten days (*this is the family of Count Pongratz, who spent each summer at their castle in Diviaky and socialized with the Kohn family)* and I am glad, because we are lonely for company. Kisses – Imre

Same day June 16, 1941 – letter from Opapicek, Ida and Judit's grandfather Kohn, Erzsi's father: Sweet Iduska – ….I could not answer earlier…you write well… As I am 77 years old, it is sometimes difficult for me to get around..I nevertheless still go to the mineral baths on foot…little Zuzi also manages to get around on her sick foot… I am glad to hear you are a good student and that Juditka will go to school too..I am thinking of you every day and every night… Kisses - Opapicek

- May 27, 1941 - 2 letters transmitted from Geneva, through Dr. Silberstein .
- Dear Children: As you learned through the telegrams sent via Dr. Silberstein, we were happy to receive news from you. It would be good if we received news through the Doctor – if not letters, then telegrams – every 2-3 weeks. Imre (*Erzsi's

brother) also wrote you through the Doctor and we want to know if you received the letter. The Doctor is taking a real risk to enable us these contacts. We heard from Ernst about Ancsi and expect you will have heard from him too. Nothing further about the crates…. We are all continuing to work, but it is questionable whether this can continue. – Love - Apa

- Second letter via Geneva – from Moritz, May 27, 1941: (* *Note that in this, and many subsequent letters, various writers reproach Jenoe and Erzsi for not reacting to the family's urgings to obtain visas to go to the U.S. This possibility had evidently been discussed with the family even before they left Czechoslovakia. Personally, I cannot imagine how such a feat was supposed to be accomplished in 1941, with Europe engulfed and with no passenger ships crossing the Atlantic…. And not to mention the fact that the U.S. at that time wasn't very eager to grant visas…. I can only surmise that the family in Czechoslovakia and Hungary was desperately clinging to the hope that, somehow, if Jenoe and Erzsi were in the U.S., they could obtain visas for all the others to come too….)*
- Hope you got our messages sent through the Doctor. We also wired Ernst to contact you about continuing you journey (* *to the U.S., or Canada, as you will see from later letters*).. I am asking him to do everything possible in this regard. We are informing him that you have the financial resources for this with Lori (**I don't know who this is – possibly "London" where the Lichtensteins had left a lot of money with their business representative, Nikolas Fleischmann.. After the War, by the way, he admitted he had used up most of the money for his own personal use*). Bela has written you practically in every letter that you should do this and it is scandalous, dear Jenoe, that you haven't followed up on this with Dr. Samuel. (* *he means Canada since I found a reference in one of Bela's letter* : "*Dr. Samuel's address is…. Ontario, Canada")*. We are deeply worried about you! I'm not sure how long we can continue working normally. Under current orders we can do so only till the end of this year. Our parents' house has been put under the administration of our office director. The same has happened with all the other homeowners. As regards Ancsi and Elfi, please correspond directly with Ernst – it will be easier for you to communicate this way. We hope to have your news soon - Love - Moritz
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- (**The following letter explains how Erzsi and Jenoe managed to get letters from their families while war was raging and no mail could possibly be coming through from German-held Europe to the British-held Palestine… A few months prior to this, they had met a Mrs. Karlman in Tel-Aviv. She and her husband were European Jews living in Istanbul and had been visiting in Tel-Aviv. Erzsi evidently kept in touch with her, and the following letter is a response to Erzsi's inquiry about the possibility of routing mail through her, since Turkey was neutral in the war and could receive mail from both sides:*)
- June 20, 1941: Dear Mrs. Lichtenstein,…….of course you can transmit letters for your family..but please do it only twice a month, since it is my husband's secretary who will have to copy the letters….it is a shame it is forbidden to send on the originals as heretofore, (*and that therefore everything has to be copied…)* …I am happy to learn that your family is adapting well ..When we returned to Istambul we found our business in bad shape because my brother-in-law who took care of it had a

nervous breakdown (*"neurasthenie"*). I am afraid we won't be able to work normally in the business until the end of the war…Best regards – Hedwig Karlman.

- (**The following letter is transmitted from Istanbul by Mrs. Hedwig Karlman. The "Franci" who is mentioned, was a distant relative of Erzsi, living at the time in the U.S. In this letter, Anina joins the rest of the family in sharply reproaching Erzsi and Jenoe for not making efforts to get to the U.S.),*

(Anina , as I mentioned before, was Erzsi's sister . She was a pharmacist, and ran her own pharmacy. She lived in Hungary in a small town (Tata-Tovaros) not far from Budapest, with husband Hugo (a chemist who owned a spirits and beer factory). They had two children – Mitzi and Hansi – a little younger that Ida and Judit. Anina brought up these children with the utmost care, and with tremendous emphasis on education…)*

July 7, 1941. Dearest Erzsi, …..it was also interesting to hear about Idus' diet to reduce weight - who would have thought a few years ago (with her poor eating) that she would need it…..Juditka must have had many children and many present for her recent birthday….. I don't understand why you aren't taking steps to go to Franci. We feel that with the money you have at your disposal this should be feasible, and that this should be the solution of the problem… Franci is informed about all of this and you should correspond with her. Please do it at your earliest opportunity and let me have your thoughts about the subject. Everybody is criticizing you about this.. I was glad to hear that you finally got the crates but can't imagine where you will store them - Love,- Anina. P.S…do you have adequate household help, and how much do you weigh now?....

August 8, 1941: Dear Erzsi … …I am so relieved to finally have your news through Mrs. Karlman and Franci. Mrs. Karlman's letters are more valuable because they arrive faster. Franci's letters, (*from the U.S.)* even by air mail, take about 25 days to get here, so the news is "old". One gets to be more modest in one's expectations and we are happy to hear from you, even indirectly. I was happy to receive the news that you are finally admitting that you should go to the U.S. - the family's best interests require it… I wrote Franci in detail about all of this – and I want you to know that this was done at Bela's request. We didn't think our writing to her would be disagreeable to you – but these things can't be helped if one isn't in personal touch any more….. that's what happens when we deal with each other from a distance - it is difficult to judge how things stand…. We are now impatiently awaiting Franci's answer.
It is good, Jenoe, that you are taking a course in weaving, which you can finish in a few short months……. Bela and his wife have finally visited us here…it was good to hear that our Papa looks well…. Unfortunately I can't travel there in the foreseeable future… The children are doing well under the excellent care of Miss Freda who knows how to handle them – they each put on an unheard-of 1 lb each… both speak English fluently now (but not without mistakes..), Unfortunately Miss Fredda is staying only for the summer months and I'll have to look for someone else… Please write to me how much you and Judit weigh…. Kisses – Annina
Sept. 11, 1941 Letter from Bela who was evidently visiting Anina, because she also writes on the reverse side of his letter. (*He seems to have gone to Hungary because it was easier from there to write and follow up on efforts to emigrate . This letter, unclear*

as some of the references are, indicates how hard he is trying to arrange for visas...) My dears, Since it is now inconveient to write from our home… Alice and I came here. I am glad to learn that you finally contacted Weinberger (Erzsi and Jenoe *were supposed to contact him about a visa for the U.S., I think...).* …I have also learned that we can contact Chase bank, which I did, asking them to sponsor visas for us… I would like now…to arrange for the whole family to come here for a longer stay, especially if there is a chance of emigrating. This is because at home things for them are unpleasant by now. They still have the business, but this can cease to be the case at any time. The agricultural land has already been taken from us, which is the loss that causes father the most pain…. A reminder - you do realize that the certificate obtained through Samuel can still be extended… it has been up to you to follow up on this. Imre & family are still OK, but to they, too, should go to Samuel…I'll advise them so…..(*In the next sentence he talks about the "partner" plus cohorts, appointed by the puppet government to run the Lichtenstein business. All Jewish businesses in Czechoslovakia got such partners :)* Our partner continues to be decent and we hope that down the road he will be helpful to us… so far they can't run the business without us… We may ask Ernst to apply for visas for us..he offered several time to do everything possible to help…. – Love - Bela

Letter from Anina, on the reverse side of above letter: Sept. 11, 1942. Dear Erzsi,….We were unhappy to hear Bela's sad news about what is going on over there.. At least for us, the regulations concerning farmers don't apply, but this could change… We are glad that we at least gained some time…In the meantime I was able to meet Papa personally (*she had arranged to meet him and Katoka's family at the border, where the Slovak and Hungarian border guards allowed such meetings...)* and wish he and Imre could get an extended visa for here…Mitzi is going to school now and Hansi misses her when she is gone… In the afternoons, when she does her homework, he imitates her.. I woujld be glad if permits could be obrtained for Imre and Papa…..Bela says that the Canadian consulate in Paris has now moved to Lisbon, Portugal and application has to be made there….Try to send your news through the usual channels…Love - Anina

Sept. 27, 1941 – from Anina – through Istambul) : ..We are happy to hear that you are well and trying to visit Franci soonest ….– the main thing is that you do everyting possible to achieve this. Yesterday we met again with Papa, Imre and Katoka's family…(**i.e. – pre-arranged meetings of a few hours, at the border of Hungary and Czechoslovakia).* Though circumstances there are getting worse every day, those who are in agriculture are doing relatively better than others… All we can realistically wish for is that they be able to continue this way. Imre looks well – not too depressed compared with others… Unfortunately things are harder for Mano *(Katoka's father)* as he has more families to support and as this is fraying Vilma's *(his wife)* nerves. Katoka suffers from this the most but she looks well and continues to study hard privately…..Mitzi is loving school and working hard. I am allowing Hansi to go with her once a week and he looks forward all week to this day…. Kisses - Anina

Oct. 21, 1941, from Anina (**though the language is laconic, she is obviously reporting that things are getting worse fast, both in Czechoslovakia and Hungary….).* Dearest Erzsi,…I have no idea whether you are receiving my letters …if I keep writing I hope you will get at least some of them…. As you may know I met father and Imre at the

border in Sept....Bela was here a few weeks ago. He may try to open a sales office here, so that Moritz can move here (* *the Jews were still protected in Hungary and felt safer there than in Czechoslovakia...)* Bela is envious of our relatively better conditions here and his dearest wish is to move the whole family here...Correspondence with father and Imre is no longer possible, be we get telegrams from time to time... I am managing the children by myself, with just the housemaid. I haven't been able to find a suitable "Fraulein" – *Nanny* - since if I hired a Hungarian the children would forget all their other languages... Hugo wants me to hire someone already....well, this should be my biggest worry!... Mitzi is going to the Jewish school which is a 17 min. walk each way. I prefer that school because it is much better than the State school, although that one is only 2 minutes' walk from home.... The teachers are very satisfied with her....

Nov. 1,1941:..Dearest Erzsi,..Through the Red Cross and Mrs. Karlman *(Istambul)* we are happy to learn you are all well ..we are the same...Only unfortunately the meetings at the border with Papa are no longer possible... Mitzi and Hansi both put on weight in the last few months, thank God, especially with Mitzi where I was afraid that going to school might harm Mitzi - she is going to the Jewish school which is 17 minutes' walk away. She had been accepted at the State school – 2 minutes away - but the other school is much better... The daily meal-time routine has been disrupted by the school schedule...which causes a lot more work as I have to serve lunch twice. Mitzi weighs 36 lbs., Hansi 34, Hugo and I 106 and 102 lbs respectivelly - featherweight, as usual... In Mitzi's school the teacher is excellent – he has time to deal with each child individually and gets the most out of each... She is learning very well....I allow Hansi to accompany Mitzi to school once a week..and since he he a natural talent to get himself liked by others, the children adore him and he has become a sort of celebrity... I know his mental abilities are far above average..The contrast is that much bigger because the educational level of the population here, in general, is lower than ours....Since Miss Freda left Sept. 5, I still haven't found a new "Fraeulein" *(Nanny-Tutor)* for the children who knows German – and I won't accept someone who doesn't..Thus, I am very busy, especially since procuring food takes up a lot of my time... Love – Anina

Nov. 28,1941. Dearest Erzsi... I saw Bela and Alice who visited here in Hungary recently – they reported that your relatives no longer can leave their village without a permit from the notary...Under the circumstance your whole family there would like to emigrate to the U.S.and Bela had applied here at the Consulate. I don't think his efforts will be successful... He is reeturning in a few weeks and hopes to get replies by telegram by then – but a I said, there seem to be just attempts, with little hope of success. I am of course helping in this respect as much as I can and I wrote Franci (**in the aU.S.)* about it yesterday. (***Here the censor cut out about 7 lines with a razor...)*** I hear from Bela that Papa and Imre are relatively well, ..and that Imre isn't as pessimistic as Bela himself. This is easy to understand because Imre and Papa are in a lucky profession...Mitzi is doing extremely well, especially with the very talented teacher she has.... I finally found relatively good household help, but no one suitable yet for the children. I hope I get someone in the spring, when the English-speaking teachers are willing to come to the countryside again.....Love - Anina

Jan. 6, 1942 Dearest Erzsi, I finally had your news through Mrs. Karlman… You say the children are now recovered…Did both have scarlet fever, or only Iduska? And who had the middle-ear infections?… Have I written to you already about the pig I bought this year? I got a lot of…various parts …and good mean out of it…I would have preferred more fat – like from last year's pig, as fat is so important. It weighed 310 lbs. Before slaughtering… I got 80 lbs. lard out of it and the rest was cut into pure meat or worked into salami by the butcher…Last year's meats did not spoilt at all since I learned that if you roll them in lime or ashes after they are prepared, they don't spoil. I saw your parents in law (* *the elder Lichtensteins from Slovakia)* yesterday as they are visiting here for a few weeks. Your Mama , surprisingly, doesn't look worse than as she did when you left although she put on weight because she can't move much. Your father in law looks very well. Bela and Alice were also here but I couldn't see them. However, as they come here often now, I will see them in 4-5 weeks. The news they told us of our Papa and Imre were as good as can be expected – they are in the lucky professon that permits them to go on working (*they were farming in Diviaky)*.,,,Love --Anina

- Jan. 24,1942: (* 2 letters transmitted by Hedwig Karlman from Istambul) :
- - Dear Elizabeth – I received the following letters from your sister Anna (*in Hungary)* : " …I hope Idus is over the Scarlet Fever and the mid-ear infection…. Your parents-in-law are spending some time with us and they feel better here (**in Hungary*) in the countryside than at home. Fortunately Bela is also visiting us often now, and brings us news from the family. It is unusually cold here – 20 degrees below zero. We here have everything we need to keep warm, but Imre writes that over there *(in Slovakia)* they don't have furs anymore, but luckily they have a warm apartment – and no one goes out more than absolutely necessary….. I am not sending the children to school (with teachers' agreement) unless it is closer to Zero degrees. We slaughtered the pig about 4 weeks ago and are enjoying it. It makes running the household easier, especially as I go shopping only rarely… even the markets themselves are closed as the merchandise would freeze….. I finally have some help again for the children but will keep her only for a short while as I insist on good linguistic abilities, and this is difficult to find here in the countryside. ..I hope that in the spring the more sophisticated help will consent to come to the country from the city… Kisses – Anina
- 2nd letter transmitted from Istambul: Dear Mrs. Lichtenstein – In the last month I received 3 letters from your sister, containing more or less the same news. She complains she isn't hearing from you. In fact, I only got 3 postcards from you which I forwarded to her. By contrast, she writes every two weeks and in a letter dated February 24, 1942 she writes: Dearest Erzsi,…I can only repeat that I haven't heard from you for a long time …I have been repeatedly asking about how Idus is recovering from Scarlet Fever….. The only news here is that Hugo (*Anina's husband) had a bad sciatica attack….. He had gone to a first class Sanatorium to recover….but caught food poisoning there – I can't understand how it could have happened in such a good place…. I fetched him home and am giving him a diet to put on weight…. I hope our father can come here in a few weeks – we are trying everything to make this possible…The children are eating well but not putting on weight….. Mitzi is a very good student - Is Judit still in Gan or is she in school already? Hansi is too young yet and will be allowed in school only next Fall but he

knows most of the things from Mitzi .. He is very interested in everything she does and seems very studious … this is usually the case with children so close in age, who have been used to do everything together…If his attitude continues when schoolwork really becomes serious, I can see the brightest prospects for him….Kisses –Anina

Apr. 4, 1942. Letter from Mrs. Karlman in Istambul - Dear Mrs. Lichtenstein – I received the following letter from your sister Anina: "…We finally received news through Hedwig Karlman and am relieved that you are all OK…I was worried that complications set in with the scarlet fever and middle-ear infection Idus had. I learned recently that similar to the Red-Cross messages, the Vatican transmits messages all over the world..so we could try this… it permits only 25 words but under the circumstances it would mean a lot… the message has to be typewritten . I went for forms but got only a single one from the Papal Nunzio's office here. I didn't use it however because I gave it to a lady here who hasn't heard from her son for a long time. She will give me a form in return when she gets one….I am not getting good news from Papa and Imre. Although they are healthy, they are suffering a lot. We would be so happy if we could all be with you over there. If you can take any steps in this regard, please do so urgently though I am afraid it is no longer possible. If it is not possible for the whole family, perhaps you could try to get papers at least for Katoka as I hear that transports of children under 16 go to you often. So it would be very important to get at least this child over to you….So make inquiries and do it if it is at all possible.

We are healthy but we are beginning to have trouble with our permit to stay here. (* *The Lang family – Anina, Hugo and the children, were living in Hungary as Slovak citizens, and up to the time of this letter, this was an advantage to them*). For 9 years we haven't had any problems, but now that the differences between here and there are so big, this is a big problem. (**She refers to the fact that while the Nazis at this point were directly involved with the regime in Slovakia, Hungary was still just a nominally independent Nazi ally, and was thus still "kinder" to its Jews)* .

We hope we can remove the difficulties so we can stay here…..We had a good winter with the children, with no illnesses and good development. May God grant that this continue. Their eating has improved too….. Best regards – H. Karlman (Mrs. Karlman *had copied Anina's letter and signed her own name so as not to make the British censor aware that the quoted text had come from Hungary. Mail from Hungary was no longer allowed into Palestine...)*

** Note that from the Fall of 1941 there were no more letters directly from Czechoslovakia, there were just* telegrams. *However, Anina, in Hungary, evidently could still transmit letters through Turkey till sometime in 1942.*

The International Red Cross was the conduit for the telegrams. I refer to them as such, but they were actually very short letter-messages, on a prescribed form, with a strictly limited number of words. The Slovak Red Cross transmitted them to the International Red Cross, who then transmitted them to Palestine. So while Erzsi continued having news by letter and other means from her sister Anina in Hungary for quite some time after the fall of 1941, most of the messages from the Lichtensteins in Slovakia came via telegrams:

Telegrams to and from Palestine (*Many have words and sentences cut out with a razor, by "The Imperial Censorship, Palestine"... or, more probably, by the Slovak/Nazi Censor ? It is difficult to say for sure...)* (* *Please note that "moved away"* means :" were taken away to concentration camps"...)
(* Again: Ernst is Ancsi's husband – Elfi's father – who was in Argentina at this time. As to Lorant, this is a code name for someone, – possibly in London?) –

Sept. 1 '41: We are well. Intend to journey away from here as soon as possible but for the moment it is not possible. Write often to Ernst and Lorant. Birthday wishes to Laci. Signed – Leopold Lichtenstein
- a rare text of telegram **From** Palestine Dec.18,1941,: Haven't had news for a long time. Ernst wrote. We OK. Hope our parents can go to Sanatorium. Kisses – Laci
-Sent March 10, rcvd March 30 1941 – Happy birthday. (3 words cut out). No news from you, report more often. We're healthy – parents, brothers
Sent Jan.1 '43, rcvd Feb. 9 '43.: Edith Braun is here. Also here are 12 families, besides ourselves and Imre (the Kohns). Saxel and Weisselberg families all moved away. We are healthy. (*A whole sentence cut out here*) Parents, brothers
-Jan. 5 ' 43 : (*from Lajos and Artur Waelder, *cousins of the Lichtenstein brothers who write from another town , Hrabusice*...): We're healthy and are the only ones left in this town. No news from all others since April, try to make inquiries - Lajos, Artur
Jan. 5 ' 43: We, Imre, Paul Krec, Miklos – (only he, no other in his family), are well and at home. No news from other family and friends. – (signed): Parens, brothers (* note: *"well and at home" means "haven't been taken away to concentration camp....)*

-Sent Jan. 15 '43, rcvd Feb.9 : We are well, at home. Still no news from all others. (sentence cut out). What do you hear from Ancsi? - parents, brothers
-Sent Feb.12 '43: We well, at home. Susi's foot is getting stronger, uses brace. Can you advise re further strengthening? Does Ancsi have new address? We don't have any direct news from her. Parents and brothers.
-Sent Feb. 12 '43: (same as Jan.15...) plus: "parents live in Moritz' house".

(* *Hereafter, the "certificates" referred to so often are visas that they are pleading for – either to Palestine , Canada or Argentina – I'm not sure...*)
May 20 '43: We were glad to receive your news of Feb. and March. We're healthy. Parents plan to go soonest to Nelly (* *She's Apa's sister, living in Budapest, Hungary*) and then would like to come to you. Try to get certificates – Parents, brothers
July 26 '43: Received your May news. We are well. Parents with Nelly to mid-August. Bela wants to move to Zilina in Sept. as the firm was transferred there.– Parents, brothers
Same day – July 26: Kurti is also not well. Schaechters passed away soon after their departure. Our parents don't know this. We're still without news from other relatives. Why doesn't Ancsi write us? - Brothers

- Aug.20 '43: got four messages of June. Parents back in their apartment, the firm was moved to Zilina. . (signed) Parents, brothers(* *by now the family lost control of their business to the Slovak "manager" imposed by the puppet regime which had been set up by Hitler in 1938 in Slovakia*)
-

Oct. 6 '43: Will Ancsi get well soon? We are very worried ("fearful" might be better translation for "sorgenvoll"). Ernst should, if possible, send citizenship papers soonest for your parents, brothers through Norbert Nemlich or Doctor Leopold - Apa, Moritz
- Nov. 17 '43: We Ok, at home – Zsuzsa and others are OK - Apa
Dec. 19 '43: The certificates for parents are with Nelly. Try to obtain entry permit for them to go to Nemlich. Ask Ernst to obtain citizenship for Moritz on basis of Visa. Walders received citizenship from Loris
(**In following telegrams we learn that locals were forced on the family, in their home)*

- Jan. 1'44: We OK. Bela and family will move to Zilina in March. Two families of strangers living with parents, one family with us. Bela's father in law had to go away. Mother in law died a year ago.
- Feb. 14 ' 44: We OK. Would like to travel to Nelly's again(* this, again, means "Hungary" where Jews weren't deported till Nov/Dec. 44!!) – only at Nelly's has everybody remained healthy. We again live at home – only in bedroom and adjacent room. In the rest of the rooms there are two families of strangers. – Apa, Mama

(* At this point, while reading the messages, I thought it was important to find out when the Germans physically marched into Hungary. It had been a German ally from the beginning but was left relatively "independent" and free of German troops till the time of the above telegrams. I inquired with a Hungarian survivor, a friend of mine, and she said the German troops entered in March, 1944.)

- 3 Telegrams of Apr. 4, 21 and May 5 '44: - We were glad to receive your four January messages. Certificates not arrived yet. We cannot get to Nelly (* i.e. – Hungary) because she is ill. Why don't we have your news? The certificates, because of Nelly's bad condition, can no longer be used.. (*This seems to be a veiled reference to the fact that, with the Germans already in Hungary no Jews will be allowed to leave no matter what kind of visas they might have had....)*
- June 14 '44 – We, and Anina are well.(* Reminder: *Anina, Erzsi's sister, and her family, were still allowed at this point to stay in their homes because they were Slovak citizens)* Why no news from Ancsi? …Sorry to inform you that from amongst our relatives, many have moved over to Geza (**This is a code word for "they are dead" because Geza had died a long time before this…*). Parents, Brothers
- July 11 '44: We healthy. Also Anina – because she is from here (* i.e.- Slovak citizen). All other relatives, besides those in the place where Nelly lives, unfortunately moved out. Mama hasn't been informed of this. Try obtain Lori's support urgently, at least for Nelly's. Moritz
- Telegrams of July 19 and 31 '44: We were glad to receive your April-May reports about Ancsi. We all are alright. Anina's are OK too because they are foreign citizens, They are the only ones there now. Of our relatives, only those at Nelly's are still healthy and at home. Leopold Lichtenstein (*We learn from what follows that the family would go into hiding shortly after the preceding messages were sent).*

**There are no more communications of any kind from July 1944 till the following one, of March 1945. We can only try to imagine the level of stress and anxiety Erzsi and Jenoe must have been living under all those months without news.*

March 25, 1945 – telegram , in French, forwarded by the Slovak Red Cross to the Geneva Red Cross, from a village called "Hnusta"): Since the end of August (*i.e. – *August of 1944…*)we were in hiding from the Germans and the "guards" (**the local Slovak fascist militia*). We were with parents, in the forests and this village. Since January we have been living out of hiding. Bela and Imre are in hiding in Diviaky since the end of October. (**Evidently they haven't been in touch yet with Bela. Had they been in touch, they would have learned that by Dec. 1944 Bela and Imre's family separated and went into different places of hiding, and that Imre and family had not survived).* Up to now we only know that Polak and Braun (* *local Jewish families…*) are alive in Stubnianske Teplice. Moritz and Marianne.

March 26 '45: Another telegram in French: Our children have been with the Starke family since Aug. 3, '44, and we haven't seen them since. (* *: Iren Starke was the daughter of Luisa Olbrecht, sister of Leoplod Lichtenstein. Luisa had married a gentile and she and her family were therefore not in danger. Her daughter, also a gentile, took care of Zuzi, Lisl and Anicka, who were sent there in Aug. '44 with the family maid*). Since August we have no news of Anina and Nelly. Lajos, Artur and Fritz are saved. Unfortunately our other relatives are no longer with us *(* the German text says "they haven't stayed"...*). Moritz, Marianne.

Second telegram of March 26,1945 – in French: Since January we have had no news from Bela and Imre. We hope they have hid successfully and are safe. In the whole area only a few families are saved. Of all our possessions we only have a few clothes - Moritz

Regular telegram, not through Red Cross, sent from Zilina . We all, also Fritz and Waelders, are well. Still no news of Glasels (* *Clare and Stephen Wise's deceased mother's family. Their mother was a niece of Leopold Lichtenstein, and thus a cousin of Jeno*). No information yet about survival of those from Diviaky (**i.e. all of Erzsi's family*) – except for news that Katoka and Hugo Lang are OK. We are expecting your visits, Erzsi's presence in particular is required. Demand return visa (* *i.e., they are saying it's not safe to come there – under Russian occupation - without an assured return to Palestine…*) Signed – Father, Mother, Moritz, Bela Lichtenstein

Telegram from Geneva, date illegible but seems to be Apr. 30, 1945: Leopold Lichtenstein and wife well send greetings but don't desire your coming. Whole family Kohn, Diviaky, except Katoka and Hugo Lang, missing – signed - Leoplod Silberstein, Hotel Angleterre, Geneva

(**The extent of the disaster that befell Erzsi's family slowly continues unfolding in the following)*

*Notes: The Lichtenstein family members (Jenoe's) were mentioned at the beginning of the "Pre-holocaust" part, on page 1.

Again, following are the Kohn family members mentioned below (this is an expanded list, to supplement the one at the beginning of this text) : Erzsi's father and brother , Hugo and Imre Kohn , Imre's wife Gerti and her father, Mr. Steinhauer. To recapitulate, father and son - Hugo & Imre Kohn, had lived in Diviaky in Slovakia, within a mile or so from the Lichtenstein family. The two families had been very close socially and emotionally.

Erzsi's sister Anina & husband Hugo Lang and their two children Mitzi and Hansi (about 5 and 6 years old in 1940). The Lang family lived in Hungary, in a village near Budapest called Tata-Tovaros.
The Schlichters – Katoka's family (this is Katya Carmel, whom you knew). Katoka was the daughter of Erzsi's sister who died in childbirth in 1933 or '34.
Also: Mano Schlichter – Katoka's father, his second wife Vilma , and Sanyi, Katoka's younger step-brother. They lived in a Slovak village called Preselany.
* Again, *narrative in Italics &/or in parentheses is my own, and has been added to clarify context of letters*. Also, where I put..... I left out part of the text.

*A historical note: May 5 1945 was V-day in Europe. Prior to it, during March & April 1945 the allied armies discovered the concentration camps. You may have seen the documentaries made at the time of the skeletal survivors, plus the mountains of skeletal bodies still lying around. Soon thereafter repatriation of survivors started all over Europe – a veritable traffic jam of skin-and-bones people going in all directions. The repatriation took months, and families kept hoping that more survivors would show up in the repatriated groups.

And now to the letters. These first ones were short because the various writers were just trying to recover, restore their physical condition, locate vital supplies and clothes and try to recover their homes. The stories in these first letters will be repeated in more detail in correspondence a few months later.

June 30, 1945.
(*The following three letters were written the same day - as all three writers were visiting Preselany*). The first letter is from Bela, Jenoe's brother:
My Dears, Katoka is writing to you about the little hope there is about Imre and family. But as long as there is no certainty that they are dead, we are still hoping that they will return, because nearly every day someone we thought was dead, returns. Alice and I have saved ourselves only by a miracle. The children, our parents and Moritz had it easier because they were hidden in a much better region. Thus, our whole Lichtenstein family has survived, which is a big exception in the case of such a big family. Same goes for the families, Waelder, and Wilcek . Of the family Glasel no one survived .

We are also writing you through another channel. If one of you wants to visit, do come, but just one of you and only if that person has a return visa. It would be best, however, if one of us comes to visit you, if this proves possible. Kisses---Bela
(* *The Glasels were the family of Clare and Steven Wise's mother. Her maiden name was Ida Glasel- and she was the niece of Leopold Lichtenstein, daughter of his favorite sister. Clare and Stephen's mother, thus, was Jenoe's cousin. The Glasels referred to here were the grandparents of Stephen and Clare and perhaps aunts and uncles too)*
*(*Another note: When Clare and Stephen wee children, their mother died. This was still well before the war. Their father remarried and had a son – Andrew – who now lives with his family in Australia and with whom the Wises are in touch.)*

June 30, 1945 –letter from Hugo Lang to Erzsi. (*husband of her sister Anina, and father of Mitzi and Hansi)
* Note: *He had very recently returned from Dachau, a mere skeleton of 80 lbs. He went to Katya's family in Preselany – the countryside in Slovakia – to recuperate. When writing this letter, he is still hoping to find his family alive...*
Dear Erzsi, I want to briefly summarize the events at the end: We were at home until November, 1944, as exceptions to the Jewish Laws. Then the Blackshirts (*the Hungarian fascist militia) took us away to Komarno. From there we were transported to Germany - myself to Dachau, Anina and the children maybe to Ravensbruck. We did not travel in the same railroad car so I couldn't say goodbye. Up until now, they have not returned. The only thing I know about them is that Hella Braun saw Anina at the beginning of March in Ravenbruck in the Hungarian section. So it is therefore possible that she will return later with a delayed repatriation of Hungarians.

I have been back for the past five weeks. I found only Stefko (* *his nephew*). For the past four weeks I have been here in Preselany . They are caring for me very dilligently so that I am nearly healthy again. So far I have put on 8 KG (*16 lbs) and I need another 6 KG to reach my old weight. Except for feeling the consequences of typhoid fever, I am healthy. Next week I will travel to Tata (*near Budapest, in Hungary, where he had lived with his family) where I very much hope to find Anina and the children. This uncertainty is terrible but I strongly hope that they will return. From your letters I learn with pleasure that you and the children are well. I hope you come soon to visit us. Many kisses, - Hugo

June 30, 1945. Excerpts from letter from Ida and Judit's cousin Katoka
My Dears, Finally I am able to write and I hope you get this letter soon.....
Unfortunately I cannot give you good news. Of our own dears from Diviaky (Erzsi's family, *the Kohns in Slovakia)* there is no one left. Poor Imre and Gerti were probably shot near Kremnica. During the uprising they all went into hiding..... (* In 1944, *in the expectation of the advancing Russian Army, there was a premature Slovak communist partisan uprising in Slovakia, suppressed by the Germans*) Opapicek(* *that's what we all called Erzsi's father, Hugo Kohn*) on one hand, and Imre and Gerti on the other, went to two different villages to hide with peasants..... This was about mid November, 1944. At the beginning of December a neighbor of the farmer where Gerti and Imre were hiding betrayed them to the Gestapo (* *We learned later that Gerti, who was capricious, spoiled and had been unfaithful to Imre, had refused to remain hidden 24 hours a day, and went for occasional walks outdoors! And so did Mr. Steinhauer", her father who was in hiding with Imre and Gerti. She was thus recognized and denounced to the authorities. This event is alluded to again in one of the following letters, dated Oct. 9, 1945*).. They were taken to Kremnica with a few captured partisans after the uprising was suppressed. This is the last time they were seen by eyewitnesses. By now we have learned that the partisans were shot and burried in a mass grave. This mass grave has now been opened but only a few persons could be identified. No one was deported from Kremnica (* *I think that she means that had they been deported , this would have offered some hope of a return with other repatriated deportees who hadn't reached home yet...*) Thus we must unfortunately assume that Gerti and Imre were also shot.

A few days after Imre and Gerti were dragged away by the Gestapo the head man of the village in Diviaki sent word to grandfather (everyone knew where he was hiding) that he is to present himself to the authorities in the town Martin. ….. He obeyed, went there and was taken to the concentration camp in Sered. From there, on Dec. 19, 1944, he was deported to Germany as "capable of physical labor" . Since then we haven't had any news but we still hope he will return,…. as many survivors are still on their way home.

Uncle Bela (*Jeno's brother) visited us today, to pick up aunt Alice (*his wife . *She was there since Katoka's father had a farm and therefore good food. This is why some of the family's survivors went there to recuperate*). … In our family we are all well….and survived because we had gone into hiding with a peasant nearby.
I recently visited Stubnianske Teplice for two weeks (**that's where the Lichtenstein family lived*) and tried to find belongings or property in Diviaky, with very few results. I can't do anything further now; I must wait till conditions have improved. It would be useful if one of you could come, but only if you have a return visa. You cannot imagine how I miss you all. If. I could, I would come to visit you immediately. I must study a lot now, as I have to do the exams for the last five years of high school . Next year I graduate and then I want to go to Prague and study medicine.
How are you all? To what kind of school do you go, dear Idus and Judit? You must be big girls now – I can hardly imagine you. I hope we see each other soon – write as soon as you can - Kisses - Kata.
Moritz' letter, August 22, 1945: (**This is a re-write of Jenoe's own translation of his brother's letter. Jenoe's English was too stilted and unclear to be quoted verbatim...).*
Our dears, At last your letter of Aug. 4 arrived…the letter found all of us Lichtensteins alive but, alas, none of our dears of Diviaky. Not one members of the Kohn family came back, except Katoka and Hugo Lang, of whom we wrote and cabled you. The most terrible and sorrowful is the fact is that since the liberation, April 1945, we had no news of them at all. Here and there we have news from German camps about people, but as yet nothing about our dear ones. We learned that Opapicek (nickname of Erzsi's father) was taken away from Hajiky (* *a hamlet near Diviaky where the Kohns kept sheep)* on Dec. 19, 1944 to Sered, and from there to somewhere in Germany. About the same time Imre and Gerti were caught in Halaksice and were locked up in Kremnitza with some partisans. After a few days they were carried away by truck, no one knows where. Also, in Dec. 1944, Hugo separately, and Anina and the children, were carried away by the Szallasis (civilian volunteers of the Hungarian fascist regime) from Budapest. Hugo was deported to Dachau, Anina and the children to Ravensbruck. Hella Braun told us that she saw Anina for the last time in March *(1945)* when she was being led to some work (Note: * *Anina and the children died of starvation and typhoid fever in Ravensbruck)*. From Auschwitz, where from 1942, millions were herded, only a few hundred came back. Miraculously, three people from here came back. One, Rena Roth, who had managed to survive the horrors of Auschwitz, seemed to recover a little, but after three days suddenly died.

In General our village is unique in the whole country: until the partisan uprising of Sept.1944, half the Jewish population survived, and by the end of the war – one third. (**The Russian came later than the partisans had expected, the Germans crushed the revolt and shot the fighters that were caught).* Tragically, only our dear ones from

Diviaky are all lost. A letter such as this cannot describe how terrible the time was shortly after you left. The unheard of barbarism and family tragedies (we know only of the ones in Slovakia from the end of 1941) are unequaled in the history of mankind. For every town a tragedy can be written about the deportations which began in 1942. No one will believe that such things can happen between humans. During the whole five years we did not have one peaceful day or night. Every day we thought: today they will come for us, tomorrow – for others. At the beginning, the deportation were carried out by the tax police (* *Some sort of fiscal inspectors who were common in some European countries. . To this day – the year 2000 – we saw such inspectors, in uniform, check trucks in Italy for tax stickers on goods such as cigarettes - Ida).* Later the regular police did the job, and at the end, when everything had been confiscated, the rounding up of Jews was done by the "garde" (**Slovak fascist civilian volunteers).* They herded people into wagons and dispatched them to Auschwitz. We ourselves escaped deportations in 1942 through difficult manoevers and remained here until Oct. 1944. In 1942 our cousins Geza, Herta and Lajos Glasel perished. In Hungary , the Elfers, uncle Hugo, the Gellens and Aranka Filip Beck perished after the fascists took over. Aunt Nelly, Boeszi, Eta and Paul Klein survived. We haven't heard about the others yet.

For us who had escaped the deportations of 1942 the terror started when the partisan uprising against the Germans collapsed in Oct. 1944 (**The Slovak Communist underground was active both against the Slovak fascist militia and the Germans. Its members revolted prematurely, in expectation of the arrival of the advancing Russians).*. A few weeks prior to this we already felt that the worst was coming so on Aug. 3 1944 we sent the children – our two and Bela's Anicka – to Iren Starke (**She was the daughter of Leopold Lichtenstein's sister Luisa who had married a gentile many years prior to this. This cousin of Moritz, Bela and Jeno was, therefore, brought up as a gentile and was safe during the war).*

We the adults, as well as the Kohn family, went into hiding near Bystrica but since Marianne did not want to hide in a town, we went to a village called Selce.... The German army was approaching to suppress the revolt....By the end of October we all separated. Marianne and I went to Lukovice and we were lucky in this choice. Our parents went .....to the house of Lettrich, the manager of one of the family saw-mills. Bela and Alice, and the Kohns, wound up back in Diviaky. Marianne and I had false papers and that saved us and many other people who used similar papers. Bela and Imre didn't want to use them – it was a big mistake on their part and we were very worried about them for this reason. Love – Moritz

(* *There is a separate story attached to all of this which Jeno briefly summarized and which the family told us after the war: When German army units arrived in Diviaky the Kohns, as well as Bela and Alice, were rounded up. The local German officer miraculously "adopted" them as his proteges. Alice told us after the war that he had seen a picture of Alice's daughter – a beautiful, blonde 4-5 year old – and this softened him. He also liked Imre because he played chess... This "protective cohabitation" continued until the Russian army was real close and the German officer told his proteges something to the effect: "Look, you have a choice – I am retreating and you can come with me, or you stay...." The Kohns preferred to stay in the Diviaky area, but Alice and*

Bela fled somewhere else. As you have read in Katoka's letter of June 30, 1945 above, the Kohns – Imre, Gerti and Imre's father Hugo - were soon betrayed by local peasants who knew them and told the fascist militia. The latter delivered them to the remaining German unit....)

(Second separate story: Some years after the war, Moritz and Marianne told us what they heard about the fate of the German officer and his unit who had befriended Imre, Gerti, Bela and Alice. The unit consisted of German conscripts – criminals who had been freed in Germany in the last months of the war, and drafted. The unit retreated before the Russians to another village in Slovakia. There, the officer fulfilled his usual duty of rounding up hiding Jews and/or partisans. He had all of them shot. With the Russians only days or hours away, the conscripts (who evidently wanted to surrender or flee, we're not sure..) shot their commanding officer dead and dispersed.)*

(up to the following telegram, Erzsi evidently still clung to the hope that her Father, Hugo Kohn, and her sister Anina and children, Mitzi and Hansi, might return with the repatriations of death-camp survivors taking place all over Europe. Until she got the following:*

Telegram dated Sept. 25, 1945: Anina children were Ravensbruck. Did not return - Signed – Weichherz Julius, Bratislava

- - - - *This is the end of the series of telegrams and letters notifying Erzsi and Jenoe about who survived and who didn't. However, there was one more letter:

We found it in Jenoe's prayer book after Jenoe died in 1997. It seems to have been written by his brother Bela just before Bela & Alice separated from the Kohns in Diviaky. Bela evidently did not expect to survive much longer, but he did... The letter is a copy, typewritten by Jenoe in German. It is difficult to say whether it is a verbatim text of the original, or Jenoe's translation from Hungarian or Slovak, as I haven't thus far been able to locate the original. It is a sort of Last Will and Testament, and must have been given to Jenoe by Bela sometime after the war. Another, similar letter, must have been written by Imre, but we found no trace of it in the prayer book or elsewhere... Here is my translation of Jenoe's German text...- Ida

Nov. 17, 1944.

My dears, We are all together. The same fate is awaiting us shortly. Imre wrote his letter 10 days ago. Meanwhile our situation has improved somewhat – simply because the decision has been postponed (* *the decision to deport them?...)*. But we see only darkness approaching. I don't know where our parents and my brother are – we hope they will survive with God's help. Very particularly we hope that our children will survive and we ask you to take them and bring them to you so you can take care of them and get all the children educated equally.

Now to material matters: ....Our family business...has been looted by the..directors imposed on us by the regime..they mocked us when we told them they were ruining it... You must sue them through a good lawyer, to whom please offer a percentage of what they can recover. ...At first we had to agree to hand the...Government .. 60% of the business – then by 1942 they forced us to hand over our remaining 40% of the shares

which were assigned a ridiculously low value. …We had to accept 800,000 Slovak Kronen for our business which in reality was worth 12 million as we had had long-term contracts – 12 years - with the local authorities for cutting trees for our lumber mills. they forced us…to accept a pittance for these valuable assets…
Alice's things (**jewelry)* are under the hazelnut bushes in the garden, Marianne's are under the window. I have 40,000 worth of life insurance and Moritz has more. There is money with our friends and with a director called Treskon. Alice has assets with her mother – half of it belongs to her sister. And finally – you have enough to live on. Dries has transferred $40,000, Jenoe and Imre have $5,000 each in Canada.(* *Dries Woodhouysen was the son of the family's business representative in Holland).* We sent 4,000 Pounds Sterling to Hans in Australia and Weinberger has 8,000.
May God be with you and take care of the children - Kisses - Bela